

Mullica Watershed Planning Project - Steering Committee Meeting
December 20, 2001
Mullica Township Municipal Building, Elwood, NJ
Meeting Summary

Welcome/ Introductions

John Stokes (Assistant Director, NJ Pinelands Commission) opened the meeting by welcoming those present and thanking them for their participation. All in attendance were then asked to introduce themselves and new Steering Committee members who had been appointed after the initial August 15, 2001 meeting were recognized. A current list of Committee members is attached.

Brief Review/ Update of Project

Chris Krupka (Watershed Coordinator, NJ Pinelands Commission) gave a brief update on project activities:

- < The second general public meeting was held on October 30, 2001. A summary of the public meeting was distributed and is also available on the project website.
- < The NJ Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) has indicated that each Watershed Management Area (WMA) in the state will receive an additional \$25,000 in funding for educational activities.
- < The Mullica Watershed's first Action Now project was approved by NJDEP and will allow the Pinelands Commission to hire a new Wastewater Coordinator. This position will assist municipalities and landowners to comply with the newly proposed Pinelands septic system rules and to install and maintain the recommended innovative septic technologies.
- < The NJDEP plans to propose a rule in June 2002 in accordance with the federal Phase 2 municipal stormwater permitting regulations under the Clean Water Act. These new regulations will require most municipalities in NJ (and around the country) to submit stormwater management plans to the state. These plans are required to reduce nonpoint source pollution from stormwater runoff and may include a variety of Best Management Practices (BMPs). Some literature describing the Phase 2 program was distributed and additional information is available on the NJDEP website (www.state.nj.us/dep/dwq/municstw.html). The Pinelands Commission intends to assist municipalities in the region in complying with the new regulations when they are finalized.
- < The Pinelands Commission received a request from Wharton State Forest staff that they be represented on the Steering Committee. Approximately 25% of the Mullica Watershed is held by Wharton State Forest. **Action Item:** The Steering Committee agreed that this would be appropriate, and Chris agreed to send an invitation to Wharton.

Technical Focus Groups

Rich Federman (Resource Planner, NJ Pinelands Commission) gave a brief overview of the five initial Technical Focus Groups (TFGs) that were agreed upon at the last Steering Committee meeting, and then introduced a proposal to form an additional "Science and Technical Support Group" (STSG). This group of water experts would provide scientific and technical assistance to the

TFGs and help to establish a broader framework for the TFGs and the Steering Committee to examine issues of water quality, water supply and ecosystem health on both macro (watershed-wide) and micro (site-specific) scales. Rich also presented a flowchart illustrating how the TFGs, the STSG, the Steering Committee and Commission staff would interact and exchange information.

L. Action Item: After some discussion, the Steering Committee endorsed the formation of the STSG and agreed that the following experts should be invited to serve on it:

- < Robert Zampella (biologist, head of Pinelands Commission science staff, lead author of Mullica watershed long-term environmental monitoring report)
- < Eric Vowinkle (groundwater hydrologist, US Geological Survey)
- < Mark Morgan (water chemistry specialist, Rutgers University-Camden)
- < Claude Epstein (wetland hydrology specialist, Richard Stockton College)
- < Kevin Berry (water quality specialist, NJDEP)

Rich also presented a matrix of the scales and types of issues that each TFG will consider:

Level of Problem	Types of Issues
Site-specific	water supply
Subwatershed (level of analysis used in NJPC Mullica watershed report)	water quality
Watershed-wide	ecosystem health

He noted that the STSG, TFGs and Pinelands Commission staff will frame questions and organize data collection according to these categories. He then proposed that on the basis of prior Steering Committee and public input, each TFG should include local, statewide and national experts from the private/ nongovernmental sector, the public sector and academia. He stressed that TFG members should have technical expertise. Next, he asked for Steering Committee input on the list of potential TFG members distributed at the meeting. Comments were as follows:

Biodiversity & Permanent Land Protection TFG

- < This TFG needs a landowner representative. Although the gun clubs are also landowners, they may have a different focus.
- < The Warren Grove military facility should also be represented - possibly John Elwood.
- < Audubon Society – Eric Stiles
- < The Nature Conservancy – Dr. Dale Schweitzer
- < Stockton/ Rutgers (?) – Andy Windish
- < Stewart Farrell is a sedimentologist – this is probably not the right TFG for him.

Sustainable Development TFG

- < Whiteman/ Taintor does rural economic development work.
- < Why is Hunterdon County Planning on the list? [*Larry Liggett responded that they have produced some good materials on sustainable development.*]
- < There should be someone with energy expertise, e.g., geothermal; colleges are mandated to do work in sustainability and Stockton has some geothermal energy experts.
- < Include a local historical society.
- < This TFG should include looking at stormwater issues.
- < Include a developer who does redevelopment. Whiteman Taintor may be involved in

redevelopment.

- < Include a consultant who does community planning - possibly Triad (Mike ___)?
- < The NJ Dept. of Transportation is a possible TFG member.

Recreation TFG

- < Add a state forest superintendent.
- < Include Outdoor Club of South Jersey – Bob Brunnell.
- < Include Tuckerton Seaport (ecotourism, fishing, Baymen's Museum, etc.) – John Gormley
- < Include a Burlington County rep. on this TFG.
- < Include rep. from Marine Trades Association – Melissa Danko.

Public comments:

- Include someone who does athletic/ recreational field construction in the townships.
- Include rep. from Recreational Fishing Alliance.
- Include county parks directors: Hammonton Lake Park, Burlington County Parks, Egg Harbor City Lake Park.
- Include reps. from Ocean Yachts (Weekstown), Egg Harbor Yachts or Viking Yachts (New Gretna). *[One of the Steering Committee members responded that these businesses would be represented under the Marine Trades Association.]*

Septic & Community Wastewater Systems TFG

- < Include a homeowners association rep. or maybe a septic system installer and/or hauler. They have a connection to the landowners.

Public comments:

- Include someone from the Pinelands Commission's ad hoc septic committee. *[Suggestions from Steering Committee members were Lee Rosenson or one of the Commissioners from the ad hoc septic committee.]*

Agriculture TFG

- < Why are immigrant farm owners on the list? How are they different from other farmers? They basically grow field crops. *[Larry Liggett responded that this group was proposed because they may grow specialized crops and add a different perspective to the TFG.]*
- < Include an aquaculture rep.
- < Include a shellfish industry rep. *[A member of the public suggested the Clammers' Association – contact Gef Flimlin for info.]*
- < Include organic farming rep.
- < Include Soil Conservation District reps.
- < Include cranberry/blueberry growers. *[Some Steering Committee members responded that there was representation indicated on the list of potential members for this TFG, including Bill Cutts, who is both a Steering Committee member and head of the Cranberry Growers' Association, and Tom DelRossi, who is a Steering Committee member and blueberry grower.]*
- < Denny Doyle is no longer with Tru-Blu Blueberries.
- < Include a rep. from the State Agricultural Development Committee.
- < Include Natural Resources Conservation Service rep.

Public comments:

- Include horse farm rep. – contact Karyn Malinowski, Rutgers University.
- Include Rutgers Cooperative Extension (RCE) rep. *[One of the Steering Committee members noted that Jack Rabin of RCE is already on the list of potential members.]*

- Include local berry expert Gary Pavlis from Atlantic County.
- Include fertilizer industry rep.

L. Action Item: The Steering Committee endorsed Rich's proposal that Pinelands Commission staff send invitations to potential TFG members and schedule the initial TFG meetings.

Action Now Projects

Larry Liggett briefly reviewed what Action Now projects are (short-term projects funded by NJDEP and designed to improve water quality and advance overall watershed goals) and directed the Steering Committee's attention to the list of proposed projects that was prepared by Pinelands Commission staff. This list is divided into ten categories (Implementation of Best Management Practices (BMPs), Wetlands Buffer Enhancement, Education, Land Acquisition/ Permanent Protection, Streambank Stabilization/ Restoration, Stream Cleanup, Point Source Cleanup, Nonpoint Source (NPS) Cleanup, Sustainable Development, Recreation) and was based on prior input from the Steering Committee and the public. Larry also noted that some educational projects might be funded under the additional contract funding from NJDEP.

L. Action Item: Larry asked the Steering Committee for input on the list of project proposals and additional suggestions. **Comments were as follows:**

Implementation of Best Management Practices

- < Cranberry/blueberry BMPs are well-evolved, though the information is not necessarily published. Who does it?
- < BMPs are out there—disseminate info!
- < Must match BMPs to the problem at hand (they are not always applicable).
- < Jacques Cousteau National Estuarine Research Reserve runs "coastal decisionmaker workshops" – maybe we can coordinate with them.
- < Rutgers Cooperative Extension is a good source.

Wetlands Buffer Enhancement

- < NJ Farm Bureau runs an agricultural buffer program—a potential project could be to get funding for ag. buffers.
- < Are buffers the most cost-effective way of preserving water quality, given terrain/soil considerations?

Education

- < Watershed Partnership of NJ is doing interpretive watershed signs (Colleen Gould).
- < Curriculum is key!

Land Acquisition/ Permanent Protection

No comments.

Streambank Stabilization/ Restoration

- < How does money get allocated? Need priorities and leads!
- < Create a map of Action Now Project locations for distribution.

Stream Cleanup

- < What would the funding source be to hire a Riverkeeper?
- < Groups exist that offer money for watershed projects.
- < How about Clean Communities funding?
- < Mosquito Commissions may be interested in cleaning up debris.

- < Scouts and school groups may also be interested in volunteering for cleanups.

Point Source Cleanup

- < Salt coverage.
- < Capping landfills.
- < There may be bureaucratic obstacles to overcome in implementing these projects.

Nonpoint Source Cleanup

No comments.

Sustainable Development

No comments.

Recreation

- < Power boat restrictions.

L Action Item: Larry then asked the Steering Committee to consider each of the Action Now project ideas and to rate each one on two criteria: 1) How easy might it be to do the project? (High, Medium, Low) and 2) How important is it to do the project? (H, M, L). Each Steering Committee member was provided with an envelope in which to mail back their responses by **January 15, 2002**. Commission staff will tabulate the results and weight each project accordingly to determine the order in which projects may be submitted to NJDEP for funding. Additional project ideas will also be accepted throughout the project and presented to the Steering Committee for their consideration.

Revised Draft Vision Statement Discussion and Approval

Chris Krupka presented public comments on the draft vision statement and asked the Steering Committee to consider a revised version incorporating those comments. She also noted that one of the new Steering Committee members, Dr. Peter Oudemans, had also provided input just before the meeting. She asked him to present his suggestions for discussion. **Comments were as follows:**

- < In the 6th item under "Principles" ("that wherever possible, the location and source of pollution affecting the watershed be identified and appropriately addressed"), the term "wherever possible is too passive and should be removed. [Steering Committee agreed.]
- < Should all three terms ("appropriate, sustainable and environmentally compatible") be kept in the vision statement? [*Steering Committee agreed to retain all three terms.*]
- < Does "pristine" mean "in its native state"?
- < Dr. Oudemans's new goals would target individual Technical Focus Groups. [*John Stokes noted that the suggested additional goal ("continuation and expansion of agricultural and horticultural uses should be promoted in a manner that will preserve and enhance water quality") uses language from the Pinelands Protection Act. However, it is not applicable in the Preservation Area District, which makes up a large percentage of the Mullica Watershed. Therefore, this proposed goal might actually contradict the Pinelands CMP.*]
- < Local and state water quality standards don't always match up.
- < Developing Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) and water quality standards is a requirement of the contract. [*One Steering Committee member noted that the issue of which Pinelands streams should be on the 303(d) list must be resolved before the TMDL process can begin.*]
- < Goals for the watershed project are not necessarily the same as NJDEP requirements.
- < Should rehabilitation of ecosystem health be added as a goal? [*The Steering Committee came to the consensus that rehabilitation is generally implied in the current vision statement*

language.]

- < The additional goal suggested by Dr. Oudemans is appropriate with a minor change, so that it reads, "...surface and ground water resources should be preserved, protected and enhanced through, among other things, reasonable water quality standards."
- < The revised vision statement seems acceptable and easy to understand. Further changes will create confusion. *[John Stokes proposed that the revised vision statement be submitted to NJDEP with several minor changes agreed upon by the Steering Committee, and that the Committee should review it again in a year to see if it needs to be updated.]*

L Action Item: The Steering Committee endorsed the revised draft vision statement with a few minor changes based on Dr. Oudeman's input. Commission staff agreed to submit the approved vision statement [attached] to NJDEP.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at about 9:00 pm. The first Technical Focus Group meetings will be planned for spring of 2002, followed by the next Steering Committee meeting.

Please address all questions and comments to:
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Mullica Watershed Planning Project
Vision Statement and Preliminary Goals & Principles
(to be submitted to NJDEP per 12/20/01 Steering Committee meeting)

Draft Vision Statement

"Our vision for the Mullica River Watershed is a landscape that will remain largely pristine and protected, with high quality water, unique Pine Barrens and estuarine habitats and wildlife, and appropriate, sustainable and environmentally compatible development, agriculture and recreation."

Preliminary Goals and Principles

"Given this vision statement, the following preliminary goals and principles will be followed in developing the Mullica River watershed management plan:

GOALS

- the quality and quantity of our surface and ground water resources should be preserved, protected and enhanced through, among other things, the definition of reasonable water quality standards;
- the native biodiversity of our region should be preserved, protected and enhanced;
- agricultural, commercial, residential and recreational development in the watershed should be appropriate, sustainable and environmentally compatible;
- the unique identities, aesthetic values and cultural and social resources of the watershed communities should be maintained.

PRINCIPLES

- that "sustainability"—defined as the concept that all forms of development and other uses of the land, including natural habitat, should be consistent with future as well as present needs—should be considered at every stage of the watershed management planning process;
- that the watershed management planning process should be guided by and be compatible with the policies outlined in the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP), the New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan (SDRP), and the Coastal Area Facilities Review Act (CAFRA);
- that sound scientific data is fundamental to the watershed planning process, and that the best available data be sought as a basis for our management plan;
- that the fullest range of state-of-the-art growth management tools—collectively known as 'smart growth,' and as partially outlined in the Pinelands CMP, the NJ State Plan and other state plans—be examined and used as appropriate;
- that close cooperation with and among local and state governments is essential throughout the planning process and subsequent implementation;
- that the location and source of pollution affecting the watershed should be identified and appropriately addressed;
- that public participation and education—including the involvement of schools—is critical to the success of our watershed management plan, and opportunities for public involvement should be incorporated throughout the watershed management planning process."